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METHODISM:

A SERMON

BY

REV. B. CRAVEN, D. D.

President of Trinity College,

NORTH CAROLINA.

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NOTE.

The following sermon was prepared for the Greensboro' District Conference, and was preached at Leaksville, June 23d, 1867, and its publication was generally desired.

It was again preached at the Hillsboro' District Conference, and was unanimously asked for publication by the Quarterly Conference of Hillsboro' Station. Meanwhile, Dr. Craven was earnestly solicited to preach it at the approaching Annual Conference in Wilmington, which he did in the presence of most of the members of the Conference, and the Conference passed a resolution unanimously requesting its publication.

The undersigned, a Committee of the Hillsboro' Quarterly Conference, now have the pleasure of presenting this discourse to the Church and the public generally.

We think that it will do good, that it is a voice that will find an echo in many hearts, and that it will be the means of stirring the Church up to a higher and holier life.

GEO. LAWS,
O. HOOKER, } *Committee.*
D. D. PHILLIPS,

HILLSBORO', N. C., June 8th, 1868.

METHODISM.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-*stone:*

In whom all the building, fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord:

In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. —*Eph.* II: 19, 20, 21, 22.

"A Church of God" is a congregation of believers, who have been called by the saving vocation of God from the state of corruption to the dignity of the sons of God through the Gospel, and are by faith engrafted into Christ, as living members are to the head to the praise of the glorious grace of God.—*Arminius Dispt.* 18.

A Church is a society of Christians meeting together in one place, under their proper pastors, for the performance of religious worship, and the exercising of Christian discipline.—*Lord King, No.* 1, *Sec.* 6.

"A Church as now we are to understand it, is a society; that is, a number of men belonging unto some Christian fellowship, the place and limits whereof are certain. That wherein they have communion, is the public exercise of such duties as those mentioned in the Apostles' Acts, viz: 'instruction, breaking of bread, and prayer.' "—*Hooker, Book* 3, *Ch.* 1.

I shall attempt no discussion of legitimacy or orthodoxy; such considerations are not embraced in my present design.

I assume that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is in origin, doctrine and discipline, a true Church of God, founded clearly and truly upon Christ, and as fully sustained by Apostolic and patristic authority as any other church; and that other things being equal, the covenanted grace of God will be bestowed upon us as richly as upon any other people, and that the sacraments are divinely authorized and efficacious in our ministrations.

I do not think these assumptions incapable of proof, illiberal or egotistic, and I hope the time has passed when our church will either be annoyed by the affected superiority of others, or

deem a defence necessary against ungenerous and partizan criticism. If Methodism is Scripturally wrong, it is the most stupendous and amazing error in Christian history; if its foundation is not divine and its structures not holy, it either contradicts the New Testament or the common sense of the whole civilized world. The New Testament says: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" And if Methodism is a moral thorn-tree, it has, during every season, for a hundred years, been bearing profusely what all men call genuine fruits. And nurtured upon this production, men and women have grown up into an unearthly, beautiful life, have died happily in that faith, and, we think, have gone to heaven. Hence, we may say of the church as one of old said of Jesus: "He answered and said, Whether He be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

I propose to discuss *Methodism in its distinctive functions and special agency in evangelizing the world;* and I desire to do this with all charitableness and Christian courtesy, not defaming or disparaging any other church, and not assuming that all truth and spirituality are now confined exclusively to our communion. To form a clear and fair conception of Methodism as a distinct and unique development in and of the general church of Christ, we must take our elements from three distinct sources and combine them together: *First.* The progressive development of the general church; *Second.* The political, moral and social condition of the first half of the eighteenth century; and *Third.* The motives, acts and results of Mr. Wesley and his co-laborers. These studies will not only furnish us all facts needful for the interpretation of principles, but will better enable us to see Christ in history, both civil and ecclesiastical, and will furnish the best data for correct inference in reference to any proposed expansion or reform.

Our religion is wholly of divine origin; none of its essential parts are human; but the church visible, which is its external organism and its body, is mostly man's work. The whole light and power of religion came not at one time; star after

star came forth upon the dark sky of the ruined race, till after four thousand years of increase and preparation, the star of Bethlehem arose, announcing the sun that should never set. All these lights were and are harmonious; they proclaimed advance, but neither confusion nor contradiction; Calvary was the fulfilment of Moriah and Sinai, and the Gospel is a new, verified, enlarged and illuminated edition of the Old Testament. Not so, however, with the ritual and discipline of the visible church. Truth is eternal and unchangeable, but the modes and means of its manifestation are variable and temporal. Outward forms have been established by Divine authority, and have been repealed by the same; they have differed greatly according to circumstance, time and people, and are at all times to be tested solely by their efficacy in promoting the great purposes of Revelation. There is no unity in the Church of God from Abraham to the present, if it is estimated by rites, ceremonies and symbols; but the unity is unbroken and beautiful through all the ages, if we consider its living spirit moving steadily onward to the salvation of the world. The old Jewish Church was a dispensation of progress, as well as prophecy, through its whole history. The emphasis of teaching, providence and discipline, were thrown upon one point till it was developed; then another was brought forward and wrought into life in the same way, each bringing an increasing prophetic light. The purely patriarchal times were the era of doctrine; Moses inaugurated the period of discipline and symbolism, and David rose up to the spiritual conceptions and higher life dimly foreshadowed by the old church. A precisely similar development is manifest in the church since the crucifixion. During the first six hundred years after Christ, almost the whole effort of the church was directed to didactic theology, to obtain a correct belief among the people, to make them Christians in opinion and speculative faith, and to conform the nations in dogma and polity to the teachings of the New Testament. Nothing could be done with the Jew till he admitted Christ to be the Messiah; nor with the heathen, till he forsook his gods of wood

and stone, and acknowledged the Lord Jehovah to be the only true God. It was a conflict of truth against error; the whole ground was fiercely contested; and sometimes, when logic failed, more sanguinary arms were used against the Christian teacher. On one side were the bigotry, prejudice and hereditary pride of the Pharisee; more than one hundred thousand pagan priests, presiding over thirty thousand temples; the gorgeous pantheism of Asia, with its vast stores of transcendental philosophy; the ancient Dualism of Egypt, with its myths and symbols; the profound and brilliant philosophies of Greece; the solemn superstition of the Gothic nations, and the facile utilitarianism of the Roman empire; against all these was arrayed the doctrine of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This truth must first be established, and it could only be done by the downfall of the others; hence, it was a contest of extermination. Through all these centuries the great effort was to overcome error of belief, and to implant the true doctrine. The substance and mode of preaching, the forms of worship, the ceremonies of the sacraments and the discipline of the members, were all directed specifically to this end. At the commencement of the seventh century the conflict was chiefly over; all the religions around the Mediterranean especially, had been met and vanquished on every field of argument; all conceivable heresies had been defeated by the profoundest logic, and the most masterly Biblical exigesis, and the whole country generally acknowledged the truth of the Bible, from the Euphrates to Caledonia, and from the African desert to the Baltic Sea.

This was the epoch of belief, a developement of Christianity in mind rather than heart, in orthodoxy rather than piety; and heresy was considered much more damning than the grossest immoralities. The first cycle of the Christian Church was complete, and all things were ready for activity and providence upon some other issue.

The Middle Ages constitute the second epoch, which commenced with the increasing power and splendor of the church in Rome. This was the era of ecclesiasticism, Christian legalism and Church authority. Hitherto the Church at large had con-

trolled all things in the societies; henceforth for a thousand years a central hierarchy became lord and master. Doctrine received very meagre attention, practical piety still less; the grand effort was to build the visible church into a theological autocracy of temporal and spiritual power, absolutely controlling all the political, social, civil and religious. To this end, the intellect and finance of the world were taxed to build those august temples that are still the wonder of nations; the ritual was enormously extended and made more sacred than the Apostles' Creed, and the test of good membership was in unqualified obedience to priestly dictation. By the sixteenth century, Church canons had become more potent than the Bible, and the Pope boldly claimed the mediatorial throne of Christ. Against these unparalleled usurpations, the Reformation rose in resistless strength, claiming personal responsibility to God for all persons, and Justification by Faith as cardinal doctrines of the Christian dispensation. The natural love of individual independence, and the inflexible character of the Teutonic race, permanently checked the sway of clerical domination, and re-established most of the Church, north and west of the Alps, in the ancient orthodox, speculative faith; but in so doing, this immense portion of Christendom was severed from the communion and government of the Italian and eastern Churches. This vast membership was thus left to waste away for want of organization, or, guided by the general principles of the New Testament, to form such ecclesiastical jurisdictions and arrangements, as it thought proper.

Here is the basis and origin of all the Protestant Churches. One of them cannot be ecclesiastically more in a line of succession from the Apostles, than another. All directly or indirectly and with equal distinctness, came away from Rome together. By the fundamental principles of the Christian Religion as interpreted by the Fathers and the Reformers, every man had a divine right to think for himself, and none could be accused of schism or heterodoxy, so long as he acted upon just principles, and maintained the great doctrines of redemp-

tion. Hence various divisions or denominations arose upon differences of doctrinal interpretation, and upon diverse conceptions of Church polity; but all were admitted to be equally of the Church general, and equally entitled to universal tolerance and respect. No one thought, at that day, of excluding another from the covenanted mercies of God; neither Luther, nor Calvin, nor Arminius, nor the prelates of Henry VIII., pretended anything more than greater truthfulness in the interpretation of doctrine, or greater wisdom in ecclesiastical organization. All not only admitted, but stoutly contended, that ritual forms and Church government were optionary and variable; and it is only in very recent times that men have brought sorrow upon the Lord's people by making a *mode* essential to salvation, and a *line of descent* as important as the divinity of Christ. Those who harp so much upon preaching the whole Gospel as it is in Jesus, should remember that if Paul says: "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God", St. John says: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book": and whoever makes essential to membership in the Church of Christ, conditions not divinely authorized, is not only heretical; "but in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men." —*Matt.* 15: 9.

But now the second epoch of the Church was coming to an end; the idea of organization and discipline had been fully expanded and impressed upon the general thought of the age; theology had become the literature of the times, and discipline was quite as dominant as civil or military law. From this era till the rise of Methodism, the different branches of the Church were adjusting the expression of their articles of faith, establishing their rituals, and giving their pulpit ministrations chiefly to speculative theology and morals. At the commencement of the eighteenth century, orthodox belief and strict formalism constituted the test of the genuine Christian. The two preceding epochs were combined and harmonized. The divine and the human were so well and so generally estab-

lished, that they had generally ceased to be matters of controversy, and nearly the whole civilized world was Christianized in belief and general observance. For seventeen hundred years the Church had sustained whatever life she had, by her orthodoxy and morals; during most of the time, hope of heaven had been based much more upon belief than practice, more upon correctness of intellect than soundness of heart. But now these phases of Christianity had completed their work, and could do no more; the body was formed ready for God to breathe into it the spirit of life; doctrine and organization could effect nothing further without the Holy Ghost to give them vitality. A new developement was organically and historically demanded, otherwise the whole human heart would surge back to infidelity, or waste itself in fanaticism. A rapid decline was commencing in all the Protestant nations, that threatened both Church and State with pollution, anarchy and ruin. The time had passed when orthodoxy could control the demon of scepticism, and when discipline could restrain the desires of unregenerate hearts. "The court of England was a royal brothel; the play-house was the temple where the highest Church officers chiefly worshipped, and the most obscene drama was the favorite Gospel of that mad generation."

Swift, Congreve and Dryden were robing sin in the garments of a Platonic piety, and were singing the multitude to death eternal; Hobbes, Tindal and Shaftsbury were assaulting all things sacred with immense popularity; and Gibbon and Hume were insidiously defaming and belying the past records of the Church, upon the historic page. A few noble men of God manfully defended the truth, but were utterly disregarded by the scoffers, hypocrites and infidels in the high places of the State. All the good felt that something must be done, that some other power must be given or the Church could not stand; that a prince must arise in Israel, or the house of David would be destroyed. They saw and admitted that doctrine and discipline, however perfect, could not control the popular heart, throbbing with the huge life-tides then in

motion. Then it was, when the existing dispensation of progress had wrought its work, and all considerate men saw the necessity of another, that God, by the instrumentality of men, inaugurated the third epoch of Gospel developement.

This is the SPIRITUAL, the divine life in the soul, the living, vivifying incarnation of the Word of God. Hitherto the Church had been studying, learning and thinking, henceforth she was to live and feel "the life that is hid with Christ in God." Religion was no longer to be simply belief, mental conviction and assent; but upon orthodox belief was to be founded a present, personal appropriating faith that brings the whole Trinity into the soul, and creates a new and joyous life. The people of God were now to realize an experience but little known for sixteen hundred years, and in some respects richer than anything in the past; the foreshadowings of Pentecost were to become daily realities, transforming the Church by the Holy Ghost, and coining from actual heart-life Charles Wesley's grand exultation:

> "O glorious hope of perfect love!
> It lifts me up to things above;
> It bears on eagle's wings;
> It gives my ravished soul a taste,
> And makes me for some moments feast
> With Jesus, priests and kings."

Methodism was and is the providentially appointed embodiment, the organism and the exponent of this third stage of developement, this humanity born and made alive in the Gospel, this spiritualism of the general Church.

In all history no other Church ever arose like the Methodist; all others without exception have had a sectional, a theological or an ecclesiastical basis of difference given as the real or ostensible reason of formation; but the only landmark known to the Methodist, was an "earnest desire to flee the wrath to come and to be saved from sin." Mr. Wesley and his co-laborers arose within, not from the Episcopal Church chiefly, not to preach any new doctrine, not to propose ecclesiastical reform, not to found a sect; but by the grace of God to conform men to the doctrines already taught, to regenerate the

Church and to convert the world. With unimportant exceptions, there was not even an attempt at theological or ecclesiastical controversy; furious opposition was made to the zeal and exhortation, but very little to the theoretical doctrine; whole congregations were troubled and smitten in soul by the burning power of the Word, and sometimes stoned the messenger, while they mentally approved the substance of the message. The object of these men was to spread scriptural holiness over the land; their themes were Repentance, Faith, Justification, Regeneration, Sanctification, and the Witness of the Spirit; every sermon abounded in vehement appeals instantly to accept the offered mercy of God and be saved from sin; their temples were the regular churches, private-houses, the coal-pits of Newcastle or the suburbs of Bristol; and their labors were freely given to all who would hear them.

The Methodist is truly and scripturally a Church; Methodism really is the mode, intention, power and divine purpose, to be maintained and executed by the Methodist or any other Church, that will live and act, and be what God clearly designs His general Church to be in this the nineteenth century. If the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is deficient in any essential particular, all other Protestant Churches are unmistakeably in the same condition; but it *is* a Church by the providence of God, and not by the design of men; it was a Church before any man intended that it should be so; and its existence, plan and organization, are as clear creations of providence as the Church at Jerusalem or Ephesus.

As a Church, ours is not the exponent and special defender of any theological dogma or polity; but it is the avowed and admitted supporter and representative of the personal application and realization of all orthodox doctrine in the life and hope of mankind. We can demolish speculative error and defend true doctrine as successfully as others, but this generally is extraneous to our special mission, and is far from being our great, primary work; God has called us to seek the present salvation of souls, practically to expound the great doctrines of the Gospel, and urge their immediate acceptance with zeal and

power. But we shall understand Methodism as exhibited in our Church better, by noticing certain developements and results that arose with our Church, and are its peculiar and distinctive features, except, as in part or in whole, they have since been appropriated by other Churches. Nor is this appropriation wonderful in fact, nor derogatory to the appropriators, for the Methodist has confessedly done much to spiritualize all the other churches, and has brought them very nearly as many members from the world of sinners, as they have procured for themselves.

DISTINCTIVE FUNCTIONS OF METHODISM.

Instantaneous Conversion. I. Though this doctrine was not theologically or historically new, no one had previously taught it as did Mr. Wesley. In all the ages of the church after the Apostolic days, it had never before been preached as an imperious present necessity. It had not been apprehended that the fiery tongues of the law, the impassioned tones of prophecy, and the gentle eloquence of Jesus, all united in one soul-absorbing appeal to sinners to repent to-day. No one had taught them that they can begin now and command the means of salvation, that they may be converted to-day; and that conversion may be, and generally is, instantaneous. This was the grand message of the first Methodist preachers, the result to which all their efforts were directed, the end to be gained by every form and manner of sermon or service. Not only the open, notorious sinners of the time, but grave churchmen and professors of every communion, were astonished and offended to hear these new preachers thundering through the land,—

> "Repent the voice celestial cries;
> No longer dare delay;
> The wretch that scorns the mandate dies,
> And meets a fiery day."

Nor was it less disagreeable to the great body of the nobility and gentry, and to the moralists, to hear it proclaimed to the poorest, meanest and most degraded:

"Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,
Ye restless wand'rers after rest,
Ye poor, and maimed, and halt and blind,
In Christ a hearty welcome find."

This present personal application of doctrine is essentially Methodistic; it arose with us, and, by the blessing of God, has accomplished marvels in the history of life. It is to-day, and will continue to be, one of our cardinal points; as long as we are true to it, we shall march with advancing civilization and growing empires; when we neglect it, we shall have forsaken the mission to which God has called us, our heart will stand still and our church will die. We are fundamentally, and by the calling of God practically and constantly aggressive against sin; and if there can be a difference, we are rather to persuade men to do what they know, than to teach them what they do not know. We can truly say with Paul and his co-laborers: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 *Cor.* 5 : 20.

When the Methodist Church ceases to have conversions at her altars, she will be recreant to the anointing of the Holy Ghost; and when her ministers in Gospel simplicity no longer faithfully warn sinners, and invite them to the Lamb of God, they will lose the power that has morally revolutionized whole countries, and has moved both the city and the wilderness to wails of anguish and shouts of joy. The mourners' bench is, or ought to be, a part of every Methodist Church, and invitations to occupy it ought to be much more frequent than they are. The conversion of souls under our ministry, constitutes a part of the tests of our divine call to the pulpit, and the same results ought to be required as an evidence of our continual fitness for the work. This is the work God has raised us up to do, and is both the strength and special glory of the Church. We hasten to perishing multitudes, to the weary and desponding, the poor and the afflicted, all these we warn with earnestness and tears, and offer them a present salvation. This work suits us and we suit the work, and in it we enjoy the love of God. When penitents are weeping and souls are

converted, the church grows in strength and unutterable richness; as laymen "we rejoice with joy unspeakeable and full of glory," as preachers we feel the grandeur and power of the ministerial call. We never so appreciate the riches of redeeming grace, never do we come so near knowing "what is the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ "in redemption;" never do we stand so far within the borders of Canaan, and see so clearly the glory of the city of God, as when a great congregation is moved with pungent convictions and electrified by brilliant conversions. This is the special mission, the origin and the essential life-work of Methodism, and no one will ever understand and appreciate our church, or become greatly attached to it, or work successfully in it, who does not recognize that our great leading work is at once to bring sinners to Christ by genuine repentance and Gospel regeneration. This is the key-stone of our system, the central idea of this Christian developement. As a church of forms and ritual ceremonies, our church would be a poor, inefficient organization. We offer very little that is attractive to mere morality or sentimental piety. We must have experimental religion, and when this glows with divine fervor in the hearts of the membership, no church was ever so attractive as ours. This leading principle, as above stated, developed in the mind of Mr. Wesley and his associates, three other distinctive characteristics of Methodism, all harmonious with each other, and clearly deducible from the Word of God. Hence, the next, the second, element of Methodism arose naturally and necessarily.

2. *The Use of the Emotional in Religious Exercises.*—Prior to the time of Mr. Wesley, preaching had been almost exclusively addressed to the intellect; the truths of the Gospel were supposed to need no human aid but a subtle and profound logic; clear, cold conviction was deemed all that was necessary to establish the kingdom of Christ; but the Wesleys, Whitfield and others saw that the emotional was taught by Christ, that it was according to Apostolic usage, and that it was a

means of tremendous potency for good. To show men their duty and their danger, is not sufficient ; they must be aroused to immediate action and snatched as brands from the burning. As the angel hurried and helped Lot away from Sodom, so must careless, perishing sinners be moved by every truthful means to escape the fiery storm of eternal death. The first thing that attracted public attention, was the popular speech and burning zeal of the Methodist movement ; the pathos of a rude, but resistless oratory was exciting crowds beyond all precedent ; death, hell and heaven, were drawn in lines of fire upon sinful souls ; Moorfields, Bristol and Kingswood were in unparalleled commotion ; London, Manchester, and Newcastle were intensely excited, and a huge groan of agony rolled from the unwashed colliers of Cornwall to the cool Scot upon the banks of the Tweed. The preaching was simple in subject, plain in style, and without rhetorical finish ; but it was all aglow with overwhelming emotion, and was sent as a shower of Gospel-fire upon the heart. To save souls from a storm of wrath already thundering upon the horizon of life, was the single aim of all ; no means nor effort must be left untried ; whatever could make men feel and bring them within the movings of the Holy Ghost, must be used ; wherever the intrenchments of the soul were weakest, there the assault must be made. This was new in the church, unheard of by men of the world, and apparently alarming to the devil himself. The prince of darkness could manage prosy moral sermons, keen-edged logic and all the schools of philosophy, but he was fairly beaten when sinners quaked and trembled, and felt that "the pains of hell had taken hold upon them." Then arose a storm of contempt, ridicule, abuse and misrepresentation, followed by mobs, brickbats, and personal abuse even unto death ; but all in vain. The great popular heart had felt the fiery edge of the law, and had heard the thunderings of Sinai ; and the good sense of the nation saw that men and women came back from seasons of intense excitement, from the mourners' bench, from the cries of the penitent and the shouts of the converted, more useful and agreeable neighbors, and better

citizens. This is the grand human agency in the armory of Methodism. All men expect Methodist people to use and show the emotional in religion, and we veritably believe that God requires it of us. A sentimental, affected refinement pretends to despise it, as derogatory to the Church and vulgar by the code of manners; but such pretence is founded upon misconception, pedantry or something worse. Revivals, as we understand them, are ineffective, if not impossible, without emotion; they arose with us, have been blessed of God unto salvation with us, and, God being our helper, they shall never cease until "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ." There may be excess, sometimes hypocritical pretence, and in many places a rudeness to be deplored; but slight abuse can never "disparage a means that has broken the hardest hearts, arrested the most depraved, and sent ruined prodigals home from the ends of the earth.

Thousands of precious souls in the church militant, and a vast multitude now in glory, first heeded the Gospel call in an hour of intense excitement; when the preacher, in the greatness of inspired passion, moved the congregation as with the finger of God, overthrew the barriers of opposing human reason and won souls to Jesus through the power of the affections; or it may have been at an hour, when one from a group of respectable unconverted citizens has arisen in the great congregation, and with streaming tears, has pressed to the altar; or when a child has been converted with a splendor that thrilled souls with overwhelming power. At such times the stubbornness of nature gives way; the spirit yields to fear, or remorse, or desire, when it would scorn all argument; and pride succumbs to feeling when it would resist all the logic in the universe. You have seen the gray-headed sinner for whom a generation of the good have wept and prayed in vain; unmoved he has heard Olin and Bascom, Moses and all the prophets; but at the protracted meeting his little grand-daughter, the darling and pet of his old age, was brilliantly converted; no sooner had the sweet child arisen, all radiant with glory, than hastening through the congregation, she lays her hand electric with divine love upon that prayerless gray-head, and talks to

him in the rich dialect of a new-born soul. That head falls lower and still lower, and soon the old man kneels before the Lord his God, and at evening time they return home, holding sweet counsel and praising the Lord together.

It is through the emotional that instruction bears fruit, that argument becomes practically effective, and that conviction leads on to conversion; along every golden chain that connects the heart with earth and man and heaven, the Holy Ghost flashes light and power, and other things being equal, the effectiveness of the Gospel is in direct ratio with the intensity of the emotional.

Would to God that the whole country was intensely excited in reference to religion, that every sermon would make the hearts of sinners quake, and thrill all the children of God; and that in every congregation could be heard cries and songs, and mighty shoutings. In the use of this means, we live and move and have our being; without it, neither learning nor legislation nor wealth, can save us from ruin. Every thing truly Methodistic is tremendously in earnest. The camp-meeting is still needful in the country, and especially upon the borders of society; protracted meetings should be vastly multiplied and vitalized in all the churches, and every other proper means should be employed, that will make men feel as well as know their duties, their danger, and their privileges.

Mr. Wesley, however, quickly perceived that zeal to save and great emotion are in themselves powerless, hence he learned, appreciated and used the third distinctive characteristic of Methodism.

3. *The Holy Spirit is given in proportion to prayer and faith.*—All the Protestant churches taught at and before Wesley's day, that the Spirit accompanies the Word, and that by Him are wrought all spiritual changes in the heart, but that He would be manifested without limit, in answer to prayer and faith, to convict, to convert, and to bless, was not only a new Biblical interpretation, but was so repugnant to the lifeless formalism of the age, as to be scorned as a mad enthusiasm,

and most bitterly hated as a dangerous innovation. No specialty of Methodism has been so generally opposed, or so sneeringly contemned, and yet it is as clearly taught in the Bible as that Jesus Christ died for sinners. This is the divine power and fire, working with and through the two preceding functions, and making them able to pull down the strongholds of the devil. It is not our theology, or zeal, or organization, or itinerancy, that has been the effective force to keep us up with the success of nations, and to give us the mastery over all the activities of modern life; but mighty men of God, asking and receiving the Holy Ghost in large measure, have preached the word in power, and have produced effects that were a stumbling-block to formalists and foolishness to worldly wisdom. This heavenly unction, this anointing of the Holy Ghost, this clothing of words, gestures and tones with the eternal spirit, was first developed in the modern pulpit by Mr. Wesley, and is infinitely more convincing than all argument, and higher and nobler than all oratory. It is this which has made our uneducated, inexperienced preachers, such invincible sons of thunder; it is this that has made our exhortation, now sadly neglected, such a blessing to the church and to the world.

Whoever has been in a great Methodist congregation upon a day, when the Holy Ghost gave great power and efficiency to all the service, and richly dwelt in the hearts of the people, will never forget it; even down to old age, he will remember that he has stood upon Mt. Pisgah, and felt breezes from the better-land. There is nothing sublimer this side of heaven, than the effects of prayer and faith upon a congregation; it was astonishing to England at first, and is a marvel yet even to some evangelical Churches. These great displays of divine power were perhaps more sought, and more common, but not more needed in other days than at present; we are most unwisely relying more upon talent and culture, plans and visiting, and less upon the Holy Ghost. However beautiful and useful these agencies may be as auxiliaries, none of them can substitute the living Spirit of God in the Methodist Church. We have sometimes seen these works of the Spirit as clearly as

objects of sense. Sometimes, when the sermon and the exhortation have failed to bring weeping penitents to the altar, the congregation has risen in the silent grandeur of faith, and soon the hardest hearts by scores were melted before the Lord; or when praying penitents have failed to be converted, and fathers and mothers were weeping over their children, the Church in deep humiliation has prayed as one man, and not long afterwards, shouts and hosannahs were heard as the sounds of many waters; or when the spiritual heavens have long been as brass, and every soul was famishing, then in answer to fervent prayer, the Lord has suddenly come to his temple, and all have been filled with glory and with God.

Then all could feel and sing,—

> "The men of grace have found
> Glory begun below;
> Celestial fruit on earthly ground
> From faith and hope may grow."

Whatever may be the experience of individuals and of Churches, this manifestation of the Spirit in answer to prayer is thoroughly Methodistic, and without it we are as sounding brass and as tinkling cymbals.

This same Gospel function has been emphasized and developed by Methodism, in another particular closely allied to the above, viz: *that when we are converted we may know our acceptance with God.* The old interpretation was, that the Bible describes a Christian, we by consciousness and observation know that we accord with the description; therefore and thus, we know we are Christians. But Methodism takes a standpoint higher, clearer and vastly more satisfactory, viz: that the Holy Ghost bears witness or gives evidence directly to our souls that we are the children of God; that our spirit by consciousness testifies to the reality of this witness of the spirit and to our new condition; and that by observation we verify these inward testimonies by the fruits of the spirit; and furthermore, that in this condition in answer to prayer and faith, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and that thus we not only have promise and hope, but present personal joy, indescri-

bable and full of glory. This, in Mr. Wesley's day, was believed by none but the Moravians, and by all others was most furiously and scoffingly opposed. The Moravians had neither comprehended nor enjoyed religion in such fulness and power as did the Methodists; this laughing, crying, shouting and praising God was a new bloom upon the Gospel tree, and, with all its heavenly hues and divine fragrance, is the jest and sarcasm of nearly all who oppose us. This is peculiarly Methodistic, and our earnest prayer is, that it may rapidly grow in extent and power; that those among us who never praised God, may soon begin; that in winter and summer, in youth and in age,—

> "We may tell to all around
> What a dear Saviour we have found."

This is the strength of the Church in extending the kingdom of God, and nurturing souls for heaven.

O, that God would powerfully revive religion in all the Churches; that mere morality, formality and lukewarmness, may be quickened and kindled into a blaze of holy fire, and that Methodism in her fulness of spiritual life may everywhere be heard singing and shouting on her journey home.

4. The fourth and last distinctive function of Methodism, is *the substance and mode of singing.*

In this department, Mr. Wesley produced a developement as remarkable as it has been influential. Hundreds of new hymns have been written, so excellent in taste, and so well adapted to divine worship, that they have taken a permanent place in the hymnology of the general Church; and while the tunes composed and selected are eminently characteristic of our peculiar life, they are generally, favorites with all those who enjoy religion. So far, there was simply improvement; but our *revival songs and tunes* were absolutely new. Nothing like them had been known to the Church or the world; and while cultivated performers despised the simplicity and rude execution, they were charmed by the aptness of words and the sweetness of melody.

In an artistic sense, Methodist music has perhaps always held a second or a third-rate position; but in moving, rousing, spiritual power, it has never had an equal. With the unlettered circuit-rider, the pioneer missionary, and on the cotton plantations of the South, the singing has often been the best part of the preaching. When twenty thousand Cornwall miners sang with thrilling religious excitement, an English nobleman declared that he had then heard the Gospel for the first time; and an American statesman could not decide whether it was better to hear Bascom preach, or to hear a Kentucky congregation sing the *Old Ship of Zion.* These old hymns and tunes are not only sacred by association and age, but are intrinsically suited both to promote religion in its third stage of development, and to express it. They are not mere poetic impulse of thought and fancy; they are experience spoken by one soul to another; spiritual life eloquent in its own essential dialect; salvation sung by its own living harp. Our grand old choruses were born in revival power, ordained unto perpetual life for the comfort of the Lord's own precious children, and tuned with emotion that springs from the deepest currents of immortality.

All over England and America, our revival singing has achieved glorious results; it is a rythmical, impassioned divinity that nurtures the souls of believers, helps penitents on their way to the cross, and touches the hearts of the hardest sinners

> "Those precious songs to memory dear,
> The sweetest balm to mortals given;
> They drive away all doubt and fear,
> And ofttimes lift the soul to heaven."

Let us improve our singing to the utmost degree of excellence; let our congregational singing be inferior to none upon earth, let Methodist people touch the piano, the guitar and the harp, with the best skill and the finest taste; but let all our precious old hymns and tunes live forever. They helped us in the days of our penitence, and did our souls good when we were converted; so will they help and bless our children

through all the ages yet to be. The whole world ought to thank God for Methodism, for teaching it to sing all the emotions of the soul, for setting religion to music and giving expression to the richest treasures of the heart.

Every form of life has its speech articulate or inarticulate, each epoch of religious developement has had its singing expressive of its character and intent, and revival singing having arisen with the developement of spirituality, must be continued wherever and as long as this spirit animates the Church. Let us then sing our old songs to all the peoples of this age, let our choruses be rolled as spiritual thunder round all the circuits and stations, and let the Church on earth continually respond to the great multitude of the redeemed in glory, saying

"Alleluia, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Such is the Methodist Church in its distinctive functions; in four fundamental points of interpretation and action, it differs from all other Churches of Christ. This difference is not one of opposition, but of developement, purpose and realization. Methodism has and represents in general all that the other Churches did when it arose; but it has and represents what they did not; it goes beyond them; it was absolutely new in its outward appearance, and represented a new spirit of life and new fruits. The other Churches represented the Gospel in the intellect and in the civil and social relations of life; Methodism represents all this, and in addition thereto, is the cultivation and exponent of the Gospel in the heart. It is as clearly a new growth and a divinely authorized and directed developement of all that existed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Pentecost was to the Sermon on the Mount.

The Mediæval Churches, embracing the Catholic, the Episcopal and some others, were full of outward forms representative of an inner work of grace upon the heart; Methodism is the exemplification and fulfilment of those forms. Those Churches were symbolic and prophetic of Methodism, but now the symbol is realized and the prophecy fulfilled, and hence

such forms are not only out of date and useless, but do to some extent deny the manifest work of God, and are related to Methodism partially at least, as the Jewish synagogue is to the Christian Church. Hence all pretence of ruling us out of the covenanted grace of God, because of succession or any other theological dogma, is not only unwarranted by the Word of God, but is historically absurd. We are a prophetic developement and new growth of the whole Church of Christ upon earth; and not by forms and beliefs, but in living reality, founded upon "the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone."

Methodism, then, is not properly the name of a sect or denomination in the usual sense, but of a growth of the Gospel, of the religion of Christ in its present stage of developement. It is not characterized by new doctrines or fixed forms, but by *revivalism* and spiritualism. It is pre-eminently aggressive against all the works of the devil. Its great mission is to instruct and persuade all sinners to seek religion to-day, assuring them that they may be converted, and may be assured of their acceptance with God. To promote this end, the emotional is used in all its modes and to the utmost of its power; as long as the intellect alone was to be affected, as in all time prior to the eighteenth century, instruction and argument were quite sufficient, but now as religion is to go into the heart the seat of the affections, the emotional must be added to the means formerly used. But the power to use the means and to do the work, is the Holy Ghost, and Methodism is the belief that this will be given to an unlimited extent, and in proportion to prayer and faith. And as an agency and aid in all this, a new kind of singing was born with this second coming of the Holy Ghost. As to organization and discipline, we have added to the old only so much as was necessary to carry out the new spirit of life within us.

Nothing was previously planned; providence clearly pointed out every thing before it was adopted by Mr. Wesley, and all of permanent utility that has since been taken, was indicated in the same way. Organization did not make the life of

Methodism, but the life made the organization. Itinerancy, the Episcopacy, Presiding Elders, and the Class Meeting, all came forth in their season as naturally and as harmoniously as leaves, and flowers, and fruit, upon the trees of summer. As the church advances to maturity, doubtless some changes of discipline will be necessary ; but their necessity must be seen and judged from the same standpoint from which the church was organized at first. It is useless to tell us what other churches have or do ; they are not as we are, their life is not as ours, they do not propose what we do. Whoever legislates for our church, must mentally and spiritually comprehend the life and soul and God-given design of Methodism, and must himself be full of the Holy Ghost. Sinners and mere moralists know not what manner of persons we are, and their honest opinions may be exceedingly unwise and harmful. In whatever forms the Word of God has free course, runs, and is glorified in the salvation of sinners ; there may we go; however much they may jar against the world and be criticised by unsanctified wisdom. The terms of our membership are accordant with our spirit and origin. As our church is representative of the religion of the heart, our terms of membership are of the same character. A church whose religion is founded in opinion, ought to base its terms of admission upon theoretical faith, creeds and orthodoxy ; but when the type of the church changes, so should the terms. We are ready to receive all who "desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins," who believe in the great doctrines of redemption, and who are willing to be governed by our form of discipline. This rises above all polemical theology, and like the Saviour, seeks to save all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire a present salvation.

We are broad and liberal as the Gospel, and yet all who enter must come in through the only door by which any man can be saved. Hence Methodism is originally, fundamentally and organically, unsectarian. If there are walls of separation between us and other churches, they are not of our building ; if the whole Christian world is not united, we are not to blame.

For one hundred years we have held out our hands all the day long, and asked to join in fellowship with all, of every name and nation, who love the Lord. We teach what we think to be the truth, but we make no particular construction a test of membership, and wage no war upon any man or church whatever. We have our own modes, but do not condemn those of others; we freely open our churches to all denominations, and cordially invite them all to our table of communion, and are truly sorry that some of them will not come. We should be truly glad to see all differences removed, all occasions of discord obliterated, and all disturbances of brotherhood abolished; and to all churches and peoples we offer, universal amity and Christian union.

"Then let us ever bear
The blessed end in view,
And join with mutual care
To fight our passage through,
And kindly help each other on,
Till all receive the starry crown."

With the love of God in our own hearts, and an earnest desire for the salvation of all men, we say:

"Ho! every one that thirsts, draw nigh;
'Tis God invites the fallen race:
Mercy and free salvation buy;
Buy wine, and milk, and gospel grace.

Come to the living waters, come!
Sinners, obey your Maker's call;
Return, ye weary wand'rers, home,
And find my grace is free for all.

See from the rock a fountain rise;
For you in healing streams it rolls;
Money ye need not bring, nor price,
Ye lab'ring, burdened, sin-sick souls.

Nothing ye in exchange shall give,
Leave all you have, and are behind;
Frankly the gift of God receive,
Pardon and peace in Jesus find."

And now "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

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